

TRANSIT *future*

▶ **service plan**

Merritt

2025



Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect that BC Transit carries out its work on the traditional territories of Indigenous nations throughout British Columbia.

Merritt lies within the ancestral and unceded traditional territory of the Nlaka'pamux and Syilx people.

BC Transit headquarters is in Victoria, on the lands of the Lekwungen People, also known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations Communities.

We are grateful to live, work, and play on their traditional lands.

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01 Transit Vision

Transit is a preferred choice for residents and visitors, attracting riders through comfortable, safe, accessible, convenient, and reliable service.

The Transit Future Service Plan upholds community goals and objectives contained in the City of Merritt Official Community Plan (2022, updated in 2024) and works to strengthen the link between transportation and land-use in support of sustainable growth. The Plan also serves to inform any future local or regional transportation plans.

BC Transit is committed to building inclusive, equitable transit systems that reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. Every day, we aim to ensure our communities thrive by providing the safest, highest-quality, most accessible public transit – this means listening to and meeting the transportation needs of the people of Merritt. Future plans include furthering engagement with Indigenous communities and using Gender-Based Analysis+ (GBA+) to integrate multiple perspectives in transit planning, and guide decisions that provide the best experience for all riders.

Transit Considerations from Merritt's Official Community Plan



Transportation and Land Use decisions to reduce emissions and provide equitable opportunities



Coordinated approach to transit infrastructure, amenities, and service to make transit the preferred choice



50% of trips by residents within the city using active transportation and transit by 2050, aligning with Provincial targets



Develop transit to integrate with active modes



Transit links to key destinations, including services, schools, and places of work

Transit Vision

The Merritt Transit vision encapsulates key themes from local plans including the Official Community Plan and the Active Transportation Plan.

The Official Community Plan (OCP), adopted on 2022 and updated in 2024, encourages BC Transit and the City of Merritt to continue to work at developing the local public transit system. The OCP recognizes the important relationship between land use and mobility, and the role that the growth of transit ridership can play in achieving housing, densification, and active transportation goals.

The 2021 Active Transportation Plan identifies that Merritt's active transportation network also ties in with the existing road network and transit network. Multi-modal integration is an important aspect of creating a convenient and attractive active transportation network. The Plan speaks to the creation of a safe, complete, and connected network of active transportation facilities that is integrated with land use, transit, and other projects and trails in the region and province.

02 Shaping Your Transit Future

The role of the Transit Future Service Plan is to:

- **Build** on existing planning, and add service and infrastructure priorities for the community
- **Review** what has changed for the community
- **Inform** both planning and operational activities
- **Drive** a range of objectives and actions that will deliver a 'fit for purpose' network across the community
- **Guide** decision-making to procure and deliver the desired network
- **Engage** with the community



03 BC Transit Corporate Priorities

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

BC Transit is committed to building an inclusive work environment that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. Every day, we aim to provide the safest, highest-quality, most accessible public transit through listening to the transportation needs of British Columbians.

Future Plans include furthering engagement with Indigenous communities and using Gender-Based Analysis+ (GBA+) to integrate multiple perspectives in transit planning, and guide decisions that provide the best experience for all riders.

Low Carbon Fleet Program

First deployment of battery electric buses (BEB) is expected to happen in the Victoria Regional Transit System over 2025. BC Transit expects to expand BEB gradually over the coming years to achieve the goal of a completely electric fleet by 2040.



Electronic Fare Strategy

BC Transit has introduced Umo, a contactless pre-paid fare product, in many transit systems across the Province. The new system enables mobile app and reloadable smart card payment methods. Cash is still, and will always, be accepted.



OnDemand

BC Transit is exploring OnDemand, a modern on-request transit option where customers can conveniently book trips using a smartphone app or by phone. OnDemand service offers more direct trips, quicker commutes, and shorter wait times.

Pending success of the trial service in the Crawford neighborhood of Kelowna, BC Transit plans to roll out this service to more communities.

Next Ride

Door to door journey planning. Provides bus location information to customers via transit apps while enhancing operations control and route information for the operator.



Development Referral Program

Local governments or developers can send any referrals and supporting information to BC Transit to review and provide comments to the local government or developer about how the proposal may affect current or future transit service and infrastructure.



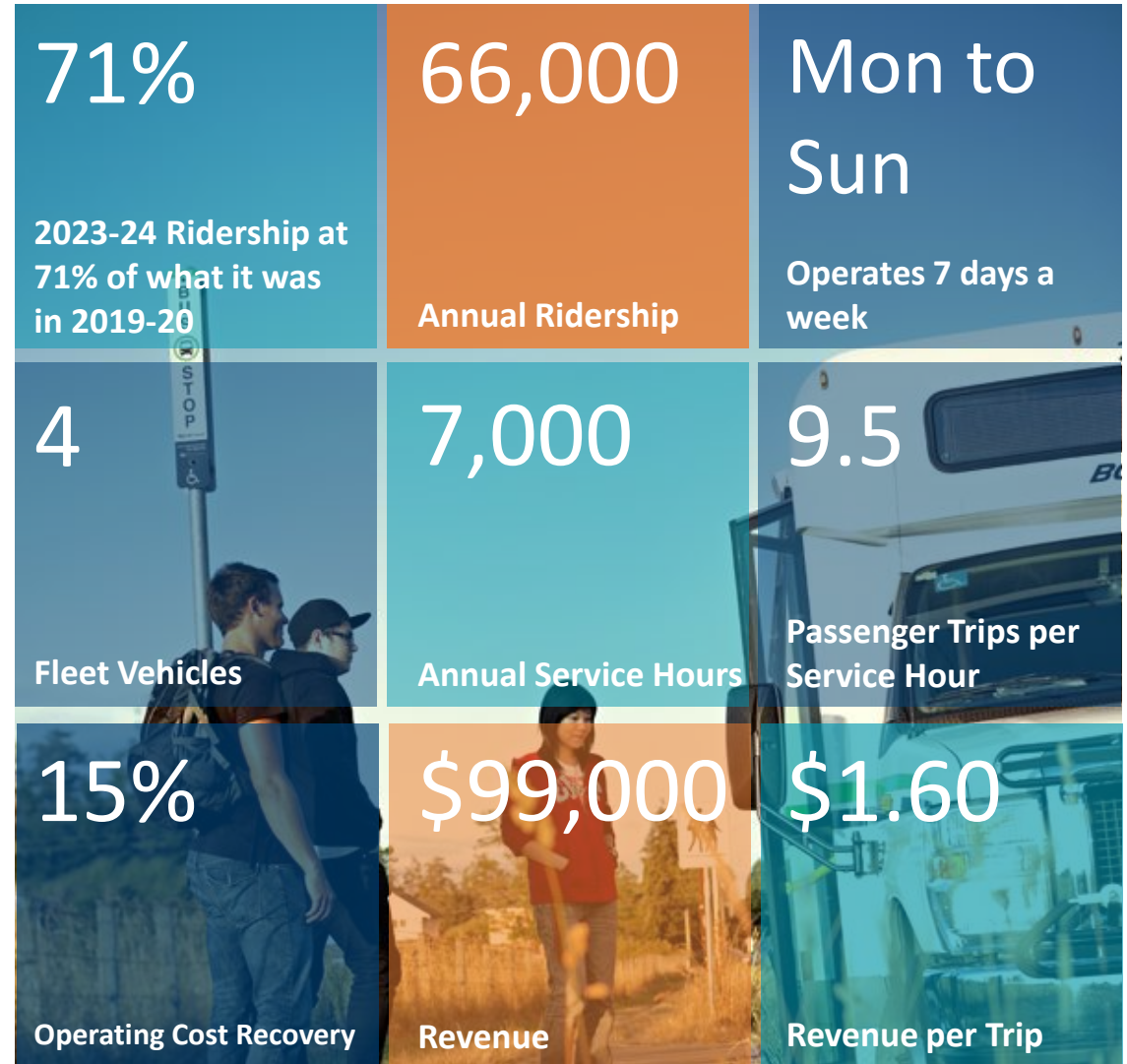
04 Transit Today

Merritt Transit ridership is growing

Inaugurated in 2007, the Merritt Transit System ridership reduced from 91,235 riders in 2019-20 fiscal to 66,055 riders in 2023-24 fiscal due to the pandemic of COVID 19. The system is delivered through BC Transit's innovative cost sharing model and in coordination with the City of Merritt who make the final decisions on fares, routes, and service levels.

Recent changes to the system include

- Routes 2 and 3 were combined to create the route 23 to accommodate bridge repair following the 2021 flood. The original routes 2 and 3 were reinstated in 2025.
- On-Request service to Antko Indian Reserve 21, approximately 2 KM southeast of the City of Merritt, in 2023.
- 2018 service change implemented Sunday service; later evening service; curb-to-curb service by request; more trips on route 1 and route 4; On-Request service to Nicola Valley Hospital, Nicola Meadows, and the Florentine.



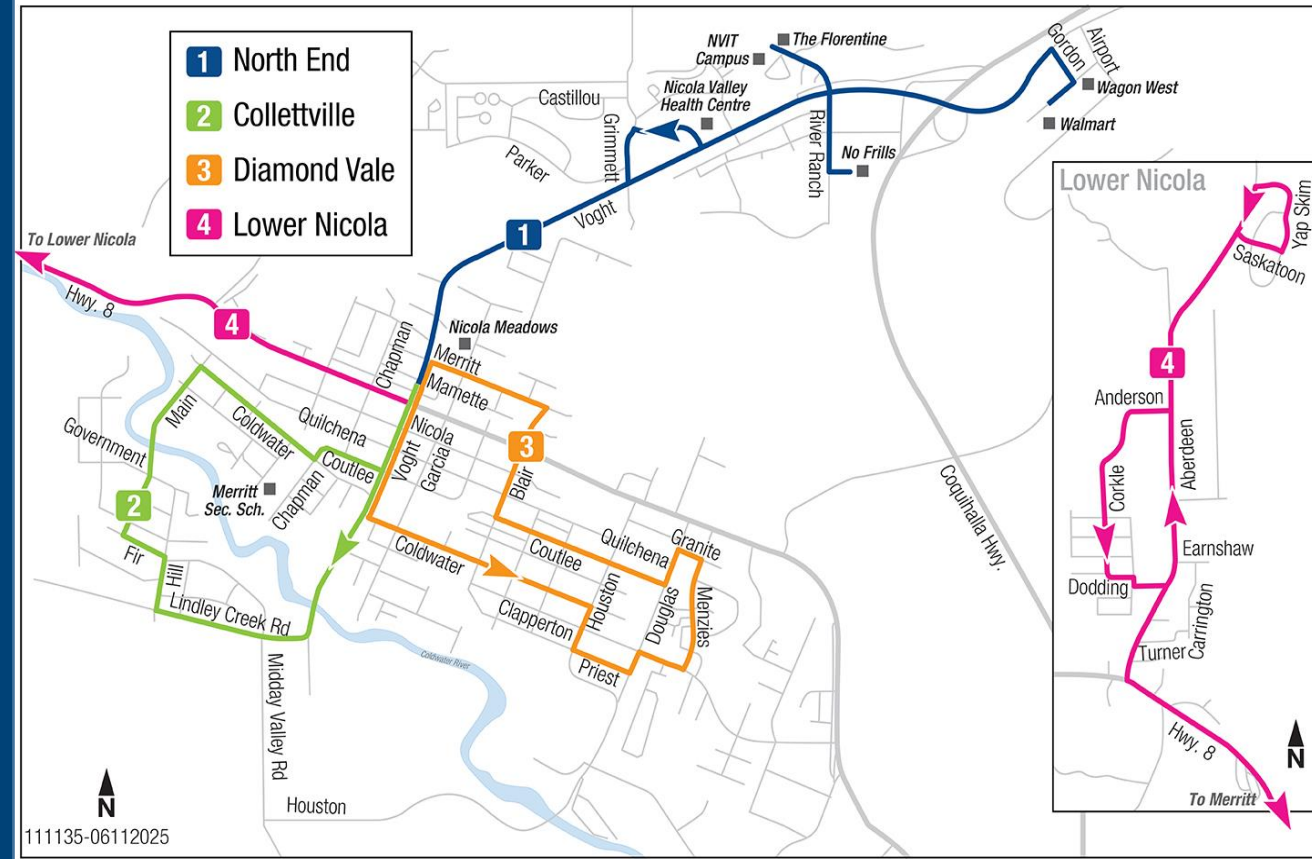
Transit Today

Merritt Transit Network

The Merritt Transit network operates as a 'hub-and-spoke' system, where all routes start and end at the downtown exchange. At this time, the system consists of route 1 North End, connecting downtown with the north-east (Airport neighbourhood), route 23 Collettville-Diamondvale (connecting downtown with the southern neighbourhoods of Diamond Vale, Middlesboro, and Collettville), and route 4 Lower Nicola (connecting downtown with Lower Nicola).

Prior to November 2021, Merritt Transit had a separate route 2 Collettville and route 3 Diamond Vale. In November 2021, the Middlesboro Bridge on Voght Street was damaged in a flood. As route 2 could no longer travel over the Bridge, routes 2 and 3 were combined to create a new route 23.

As of May 2025, Merritt Transit returned to the original route 2 Collettville and route 3 Diamond Vale.



Approximately
63%

of system ridership
is attributed to
route 1

Approximately
4%

of system ridership
is attributed to
route 2

Approximately
21%

of system ridership
is attributed to
route 3

Approximately
12%

of system ridership
is attributed to
route 4

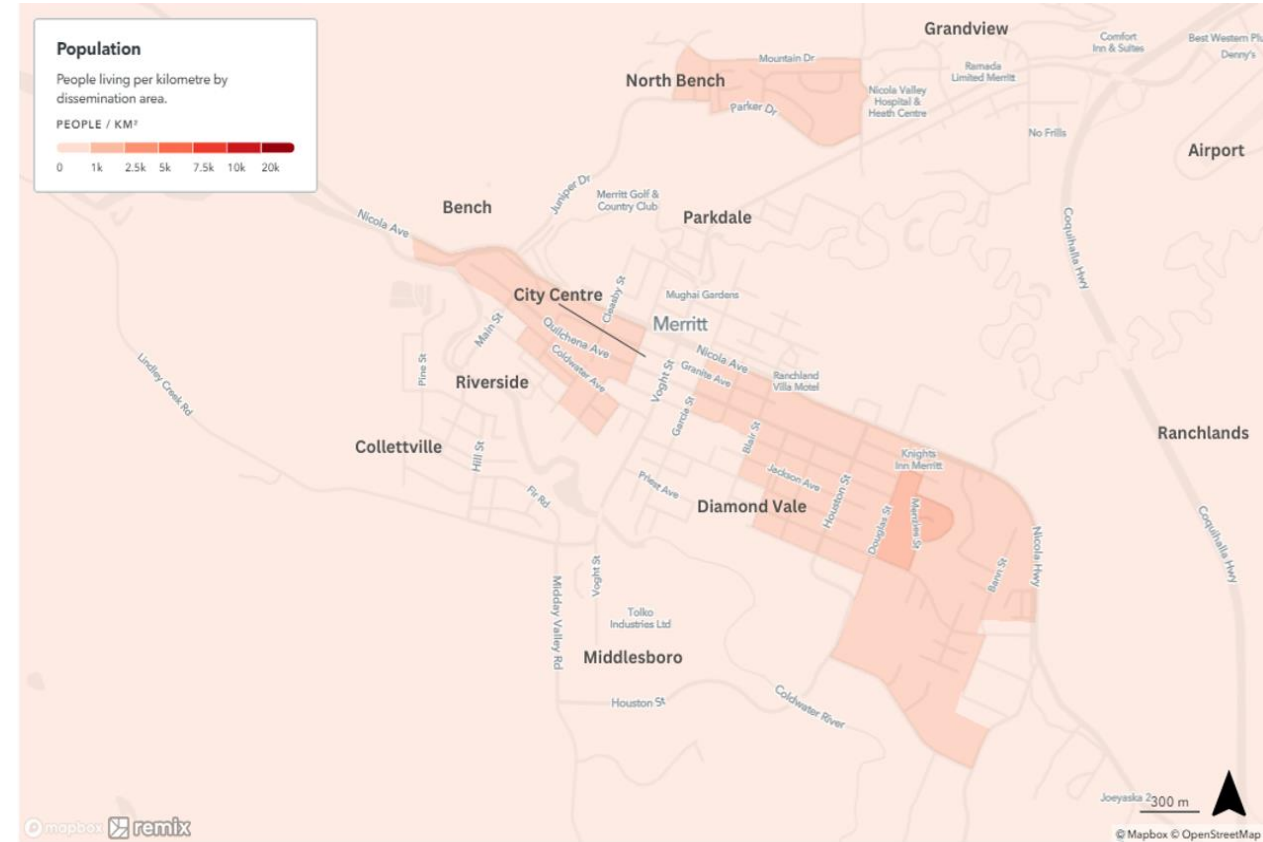
05 Transit Need

Who is the City of Merritt

Merritt is part of the Thompson Nicola Regional District, located in the beautiful Nicola Valley in the south-central interior of British Columbia. Although the overall population of Merritt decreased by 1.2% between 2016 and 2021 (Census, 2021), the number of youth and seniors increased by 7,700 people, or 8.5%. The map on the right illustrates the population distribution of Merritt's residents

About Merritt

- Approximately 16.83% of commutes originate outside of Merritt
- Merritt's population is concentrated around the City Centre, Riverside, Dimond Vale, and Bench neighbourhoods.
- Transit Mode Share (commutes) in 2021 is 0.6%



-1.2%

Population
decrease since
2016

25%

Merritt is comprised of
Youth (15 -19) and
Seniors

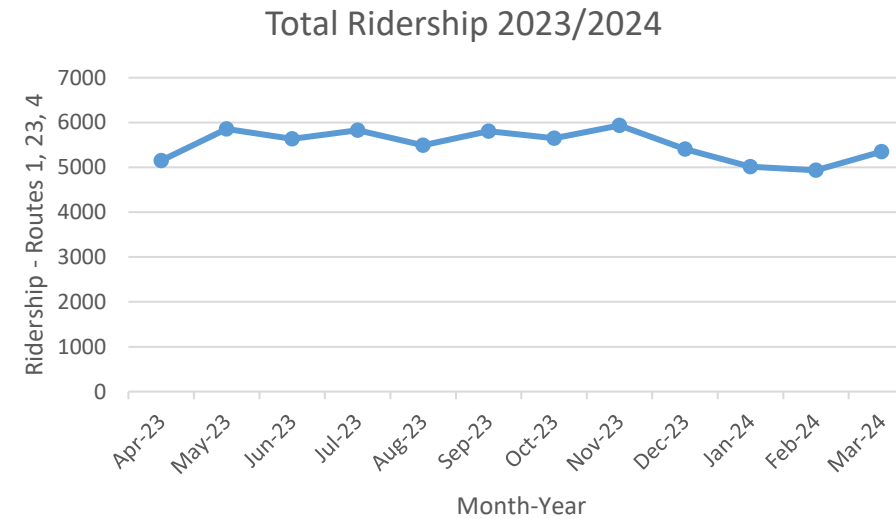
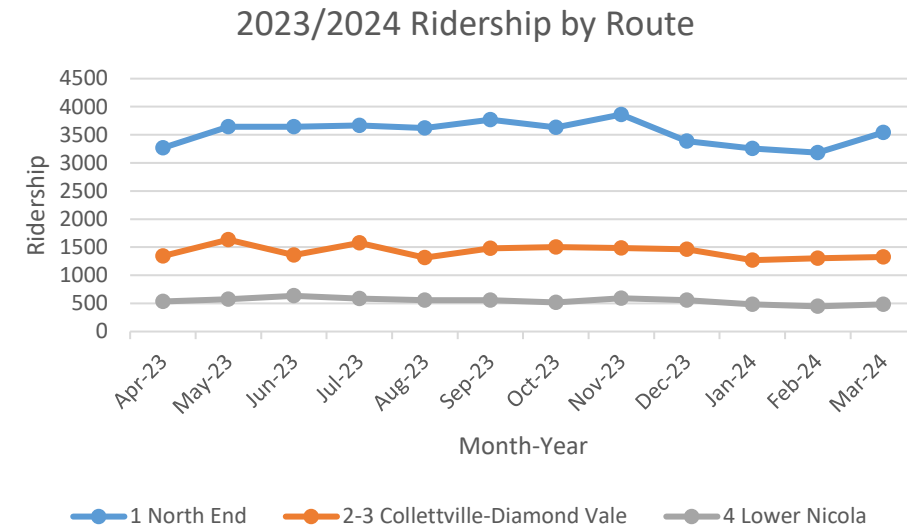
83%

Commute within the
Merritt Census
Subdivision

06 System Performance

Daily trips by month

- Transit service and ridership is relatively constant throughout the year.
- Slight reduction in ridership during the winter and early-mid spring months, which is similar to pre-COVID as shown on the next page.

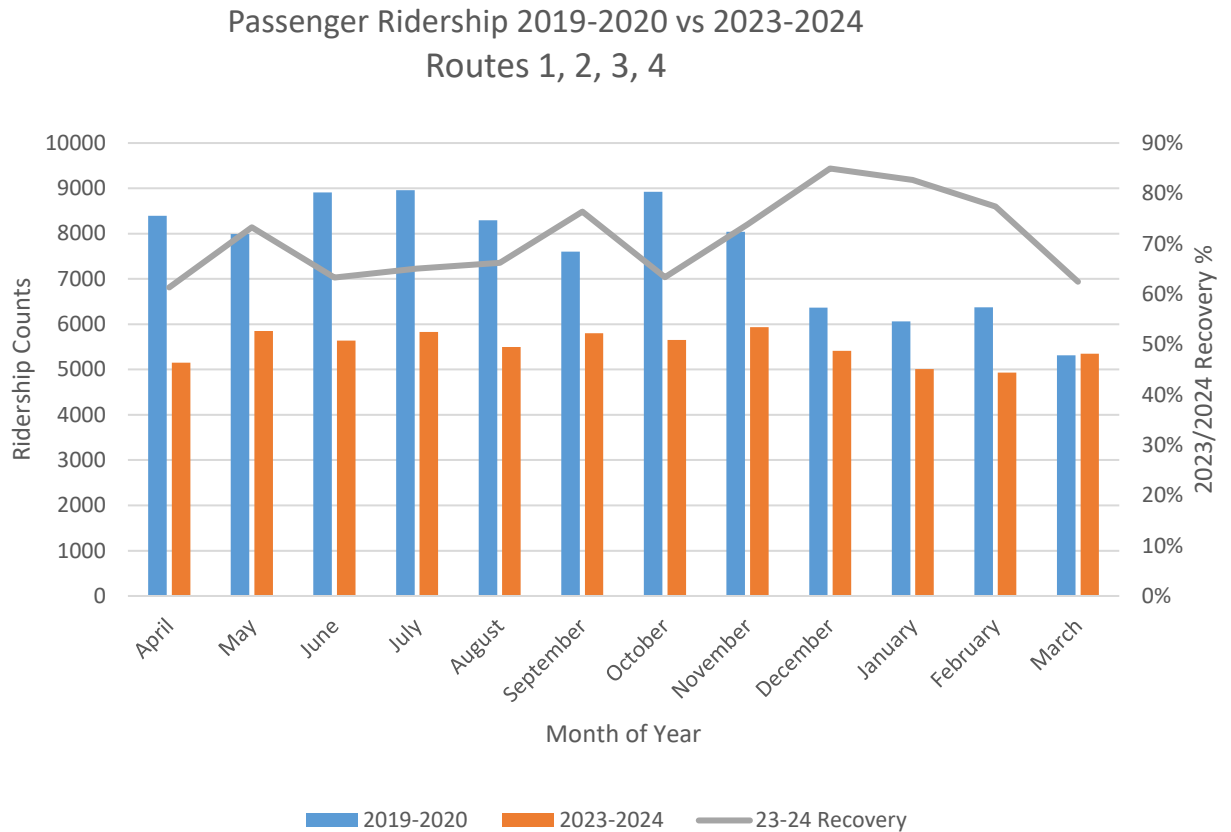


Source: Manual operator counts

System Performance

COVID Ridership Impacts

- 2019-2020: Ridership reached 91,235 total boardings.
- 2020-2021: Ridership declined, aligning with the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, ridership has been steadily increasing.
- 2023-2024: Ridership increased to 66,055, or 71% of the total 2019-2020 ridership.
- BC Transit will work with local government and operations staff to monitor and ensure ridership continues trending upwards.



Source: 2019-2020 fiscal: fare box Data. 2023-2024 fiscal: manual operator counts

07 Engagement

How we engaged with Merritt area community

As part of BC Transit's commitment to public engagement, outreach was carried out to identify desired service and infrastructure improvements. Activities included open houses with pop-up kiosk style booths, public survey, operator survey, and in-person operator conversations.

Open houses took place at four locations from Nov 6-8, 2023. The operator survey was available October 16-November 22, 2023. The public survey was available both online and hard copy November 6-December 6, 2023. In-person discussions with operators took place October 17-19, 2023. Marketing to the community was facilitated through a variety of tools including the City website, newspaper ads, internal bus ads, and social media.



83 Public Survey
Respondents



In-Person Conversations
with **71%** Operators



51 Open House
Participants



57% Operator
Survey
Respondents

Refer to the full engagement summary report: engage.bctransit.com/merritt2023

08 Public Survey – Who We Heard From and How Service is Used

A majority of Merritt Transit customers use transit for shopping

Key findings:

- Most public survey respondents live in the Diamond Vale neighbourhood (28%) and use the service multiple times a week (26%).
- A significant percentage of public survey respondents also said they never use Merritt Transit (25%).
- Most transit riders use transit for shopping (51%) and social or recreational purposes (42%).



09 Public Engagement – Key Findings

Demand for Service to Other Areas:

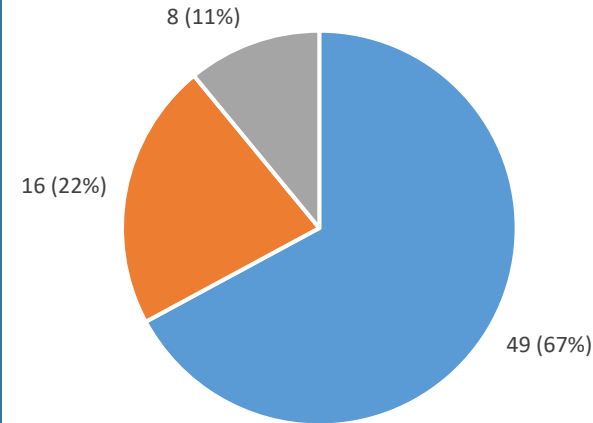
- Service connecting the Bench neighbourhood area (ie. Juniper Drive, Parker Drive, Grimmer Street, Castillou Crescent) to the downtown exchange (Mamette Avenue at Voght Street).
- Service farther east to Armstrong Street and Clapperton Avenue.
- Demand for service to the Coldwater Avenue west neighbourhood. The return to pre-flood routing now serves this demand.

Span: Demand for late-night and Sunday service to Lower Nicola.

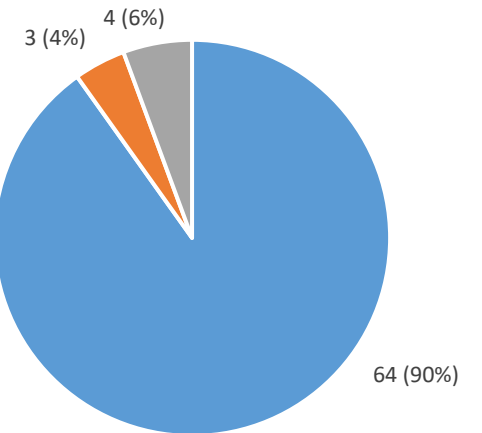
Frequency: Demand for increased frequency on all routes.

Demand for Bus Stop Improvements: Bus stops could be located closer together and include more amenities, such as shelters to protect riders from the elements.

Public Survey Responses in Support of the Proposed New Route to the Bench Neighbourhood

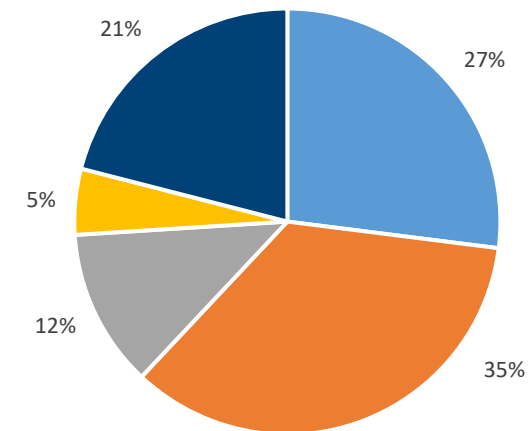


Public Survey Responses in Support of Extending Service Hours on Route 4: Lower Nicola



■ Valuable ■ Not valuable ■ Not applicable/Don't use the transit service

Public Survey Level of Satisfaction with Merritt Transit Service



■ Very Satisfied ■ Satisfied ■ Not Satisfied ■ Very Unsatisfied ■ Not Applicable/Don't Use the Service

10 Ongoing Engagement

Voice of the Rider

BC Transit believes that to understand our riders and prospective riders better, we need to make the community a part of important business decisions. Voice of the Rider is an effort to drive community engagement on every project we undertake, understand the satisfaction levels, and take suggestions to improve the overall transit experience.

Engaging with Indigenous Communities

BC Transit is developing a strategy for increasing engagement with First Nations and supporting meaningful reconciliation. We recognize the need to engage with communities in ways that are appropriate for each culture. BC Transit will continue to work with Indigenous communities including the Lower Nicola Indian Band and Cooks Ferry to understand how we can best serve their community.

Learn more at engage.bctransit.com/frequently-asked-questions

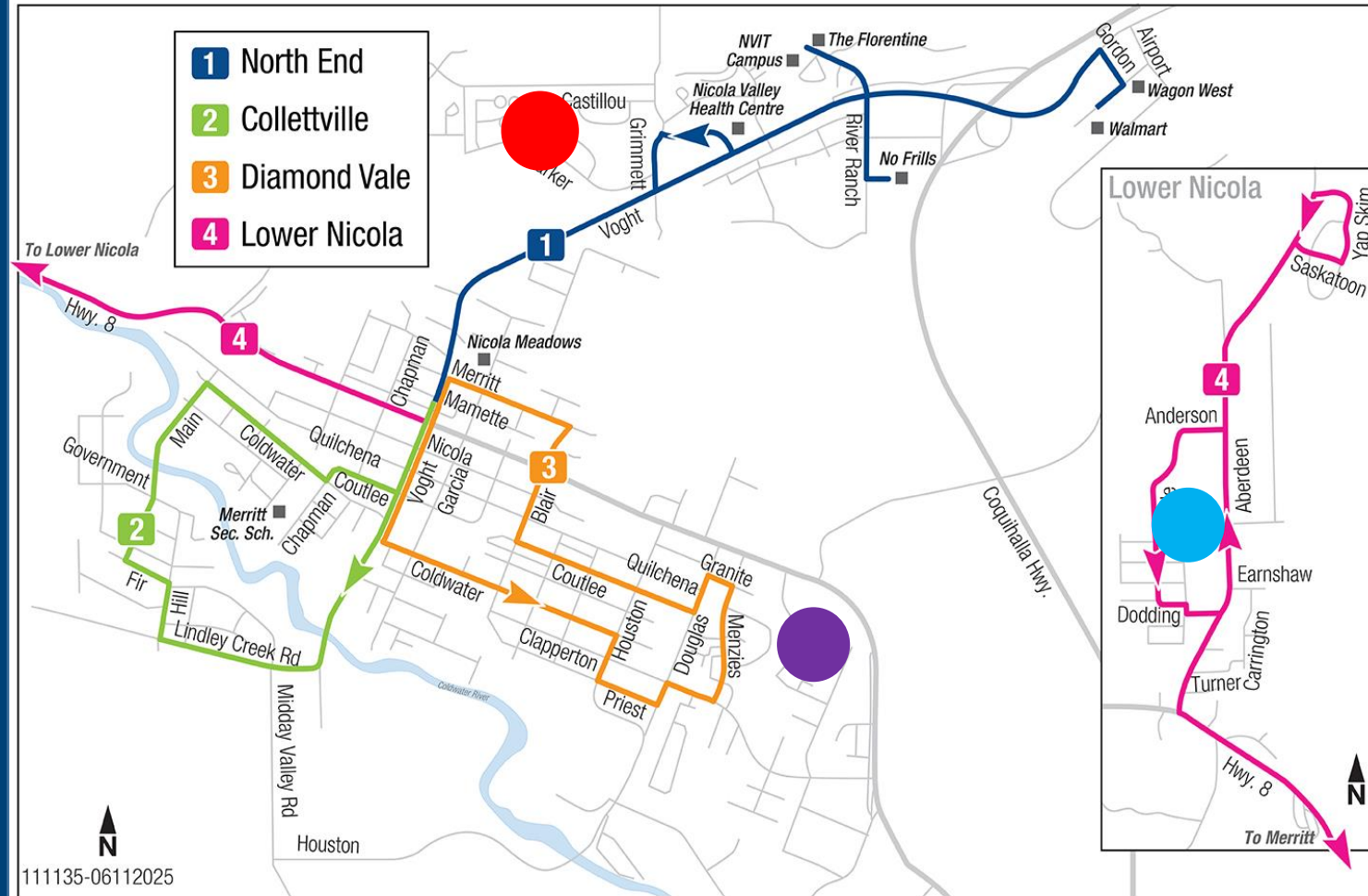


11 Your Future Network

Service

These service priorities will help to shape Merritt Transit over the next seven years providing improved transit connections.

-  Lower Nicola Late Night Service and Sunday Service
-  Bench Neighbourhood Service
-  Armstrong Street Service
-  Service Frequency Improvements on all Routes



12 Service Priorities – Short to Medium Term

Short to Medium-Term Service Option (1-5 Years)

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Lower Nicola Late Night Service and Sunday Service	Engagement results showed a strong demand for expanding the existing route 4 Lower Nicola for Sunday service as well as late night weekday and Saturday service.	900 hours, 1 bus

Lower Nicola Late Night Service and Sunday Service

Engagement results showed a strong demand for expanding the existing route 4 Lower Nicola for Sunday service as well as late night weekday and Saturday service.

Estimated resources for this option assume a certain cycle time, number of trips, and that no bus can be shared with another route. Prior to implementation, resources and route safety must be reassessed from a scheduling and operations perspective. This service is funded by the Thompson Nicola Regional District and Lower Nicola Indian Band.

Monday to Friday Late Night Service: 400 hours
Saturday Late Night Service: 100 hours
Sunday Service: 400 hours

900

Annual service hours

1

Light-duty vehicle

4 Lower Nicola		
Monday to Friday		
A Downtown (Mamette at Voght)	F Rocky Pines (Saskatoon at Yap Skim)	A Downtown (Mamette at Voght)
7:12	7:26	7:45
11:12	11:26	11:45
5:12	5:26	5:45
8:12	8:26	8:45
10:12	10:26	10:45
Saturday		
7:12	7:26	7:45
11:12	11:26	11:45
5:12	5:26	5:45
8:12	8:26	8:45
10:12	10:26	10:45
Sunday		
7:12	7:26	7:45
11:12	11:26	11:45
5:12	5:26	5:45

Existing schedule is in black; potential expanded schedule is in red.

13 Service Priorities – Medium Term

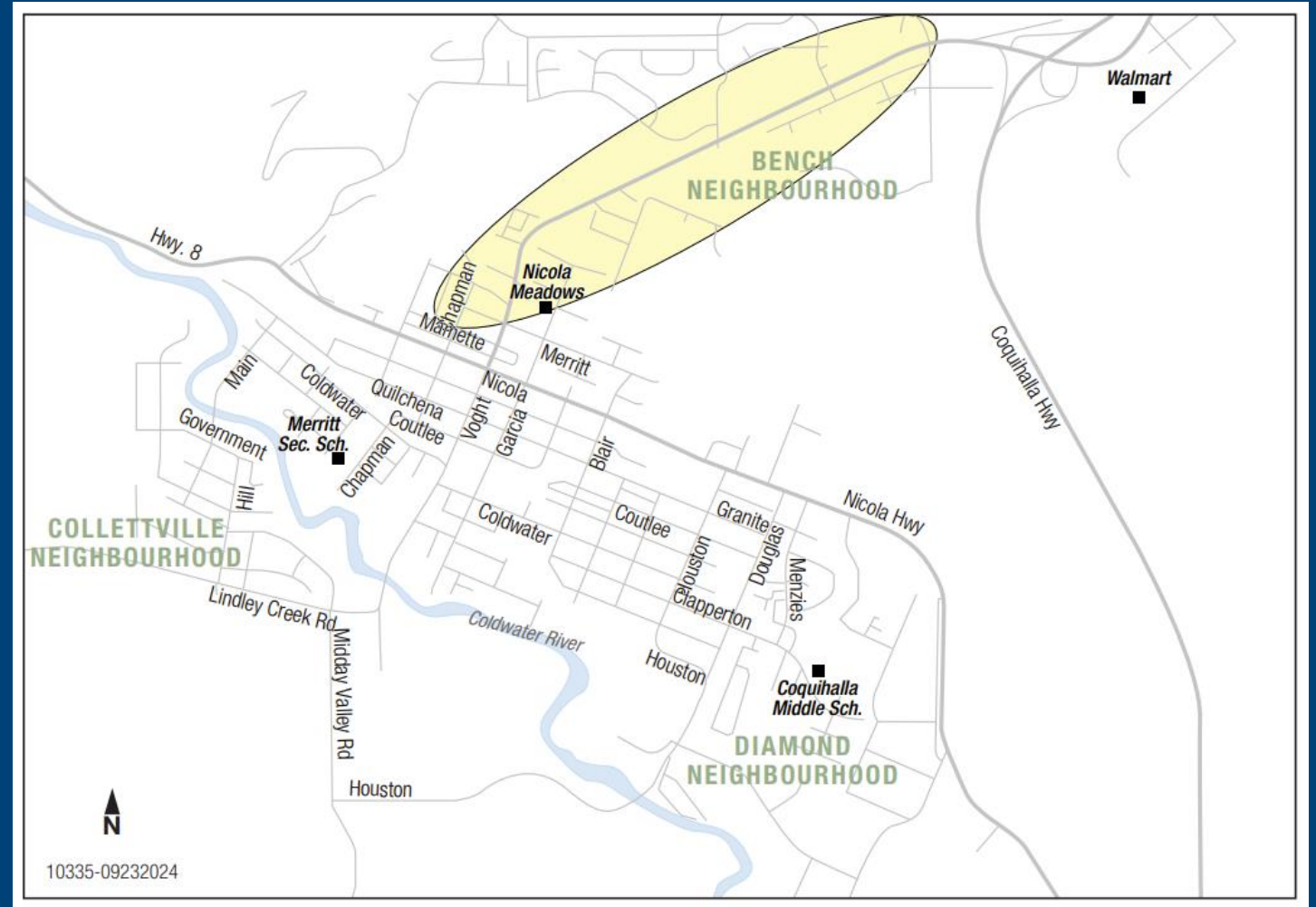
Medium-Term Service Option (3-5 Years)

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Bench Neighbourhood Service	Engagement results showed demand for adding a new route to serve the Bench neighbourhood.	Option 1: 450 hours, 1 bus Option 2: 625 hours, 1 bus

New Service to The Bench Neighbourhood

Engagement results identified demand for transit service to the Bench neighbourhood. As such, several new route options are outlined below.

Estimated resources for each option assume a certain cycle time, number of trips, and that no bus can be shared with another route. Prior to implementation, resources and route safety must be reassessed from a scheduling and operations perspective.



Bench neighbourhood area highlighted in yellow.

New Service to The Bench Neighbourhood

Option 1: Downtown to College Via Bench - Weekdays

This is a new bidirectional route between downtown and Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

The outbound trip from Parker Drive would be left on Grimmett Street, right on Reid Avenue, right on Walters Street, left on Voght Street, left on Belshaw Street, and arriving at Nichola Valley Institute of Technology.

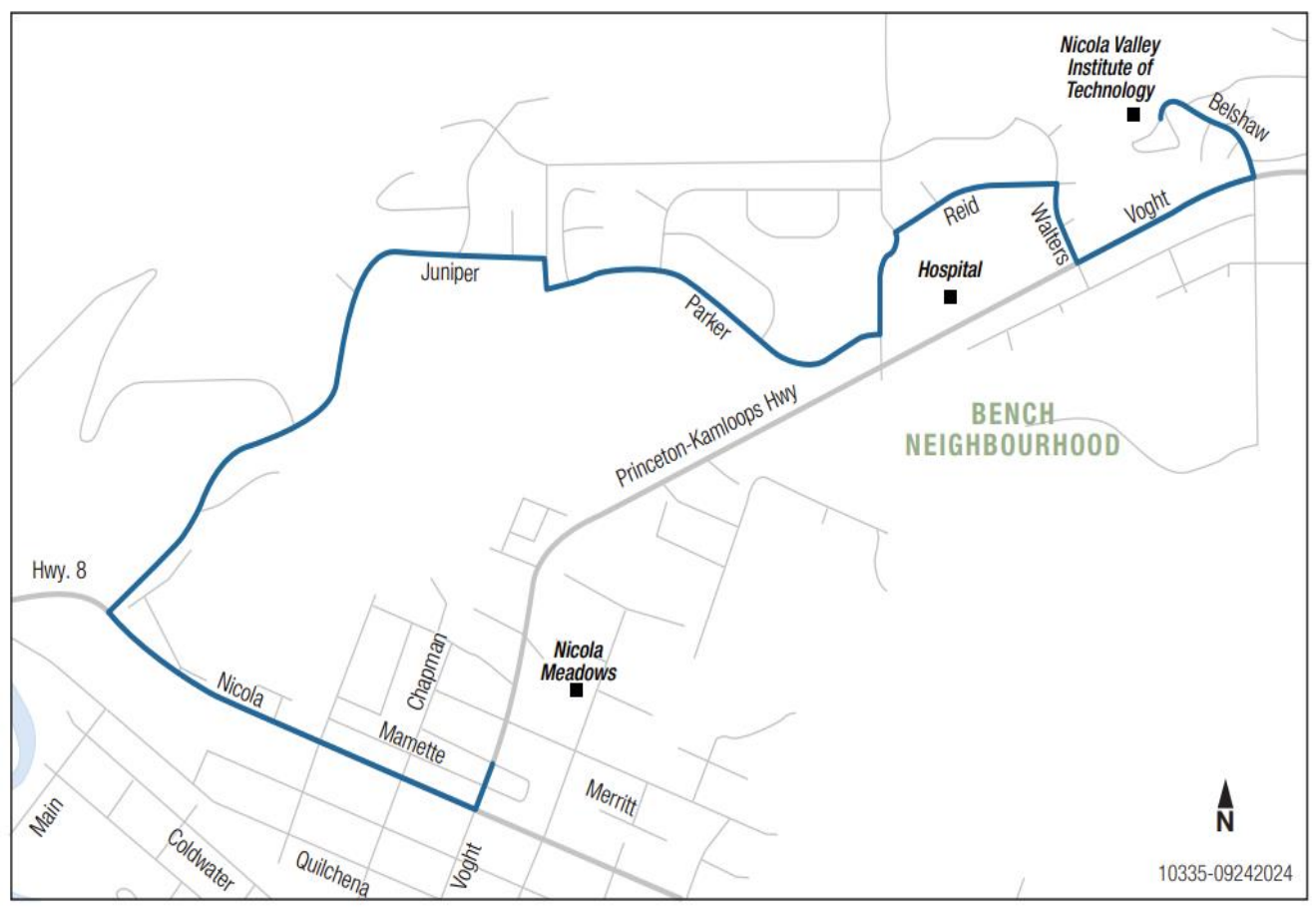
Weekdays	Saturday	Sunday
Two AM roundtrips	--	--
Two PM roundtrips	--	--

450

Annual service hours

1

Light-duty vehicle



Prior to implementation, resources and route safety must be reassessed from a scheduling and operations perspective.

New Service to The Bench Neighbourhood

Option 2: Downtown to College Via Bench - Daily

This scenario is the same as Option 1 on the previous page except service is Monday through Sunday instead of weekdays only.

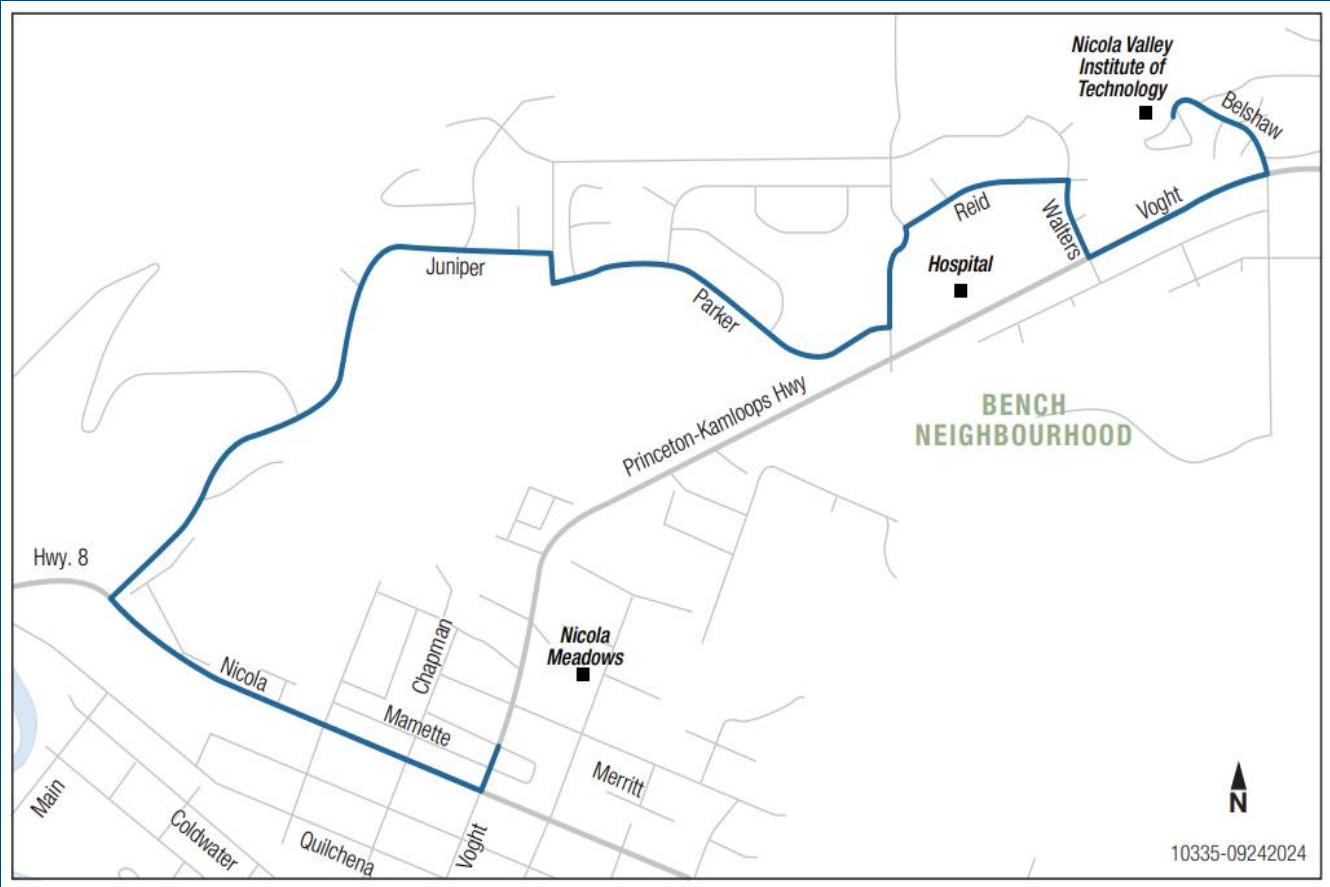
Weekdays	Saturday	Sunday
Two AM roundtrips	Two AM roundtrips	Two AM roundtrips
Two PM roundtrips	Two PM roundtrips	Two PM roundtrips

625

Annual service hours

1

Light-duty vehicle



Prior to implementation, resources and route safety must be reassessed from a scheduling and operations perspective.

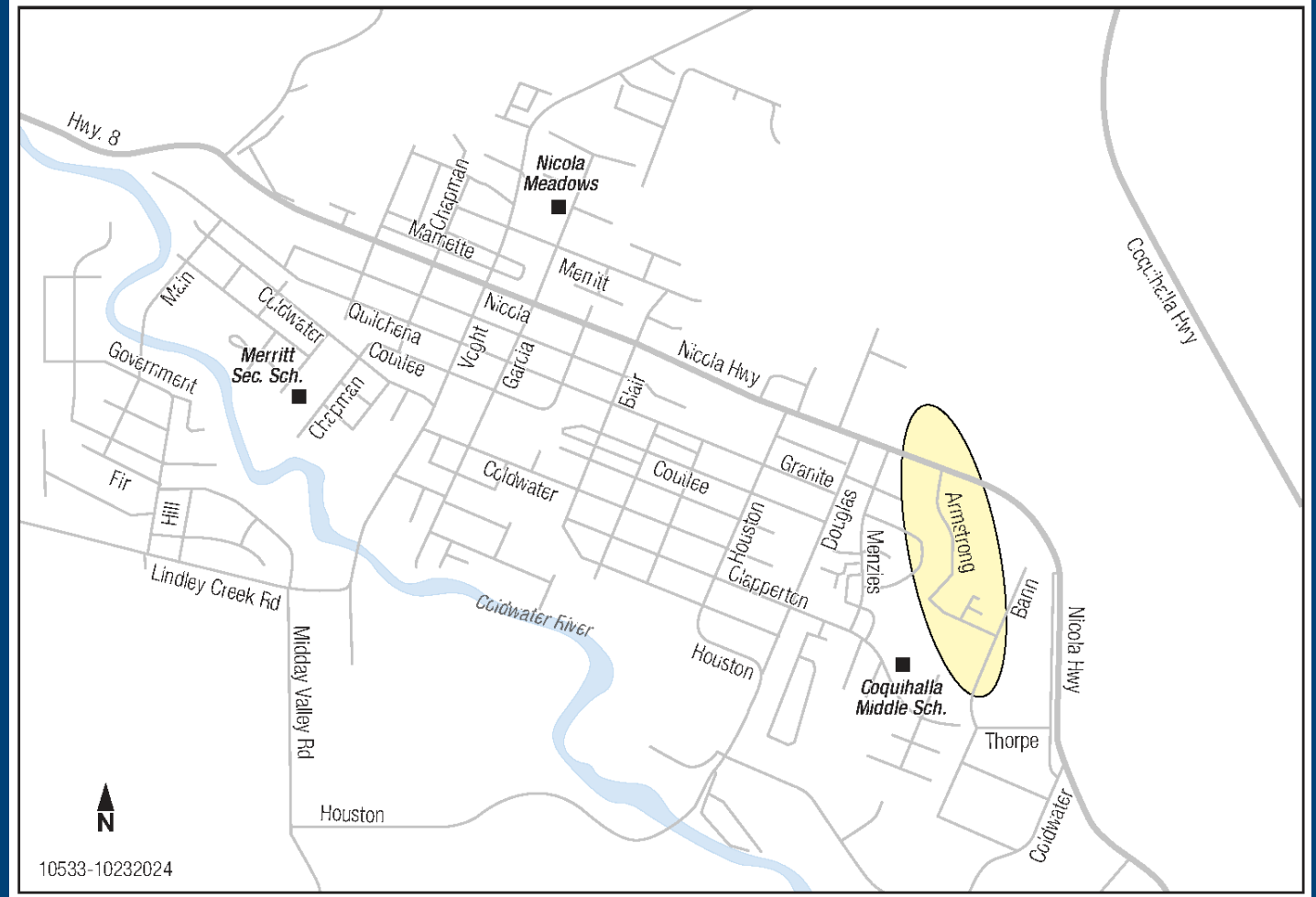
14 Service Priorities – Long Term

Long-Term Service Option (5-7 Years)

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Armstrong Street Service	Engagement results showed demand for extending service to Armstrong Street.	Option 1: 550 hours, 0 bus Option 2: 550 hours, 0 bus
Service Frequency Improvements	Engagement results showed demand for increasing frequency on existing routes. Further exploration required.	TBD

Expand Service to Armstrong Street

Demand for service to Armstrong Street was highlighted in the engagement responses. Several service options are outlined on the pages that follow. Each option would require about a 10-minute extension to route 3, expanding the headway (frequency) of service by about 10-minutes. This is important to consider as some customers would need to stay on the bus for an additional ten minutes before reaching their destination. Estimated resources for each option assumes a certain cycle time, number of trips, and that a bus can be shared with another route. Prior to implementation, resources and route safety must be reassessed based on scheduling and operational considerations.



Expand Service to Armstrong Street

Option 2: Extend Route 3 to Armstrong Street – Clapperton Avenue Connection

This option could be implemented if the road network were connected from Bann Street through to Clapperton Avenue.

Considerations: Like Option 1, Option 2 impacts the trip length of an existing route. In addition to Armstrong St, engagement results showed demand for service along Clapperton Ave.

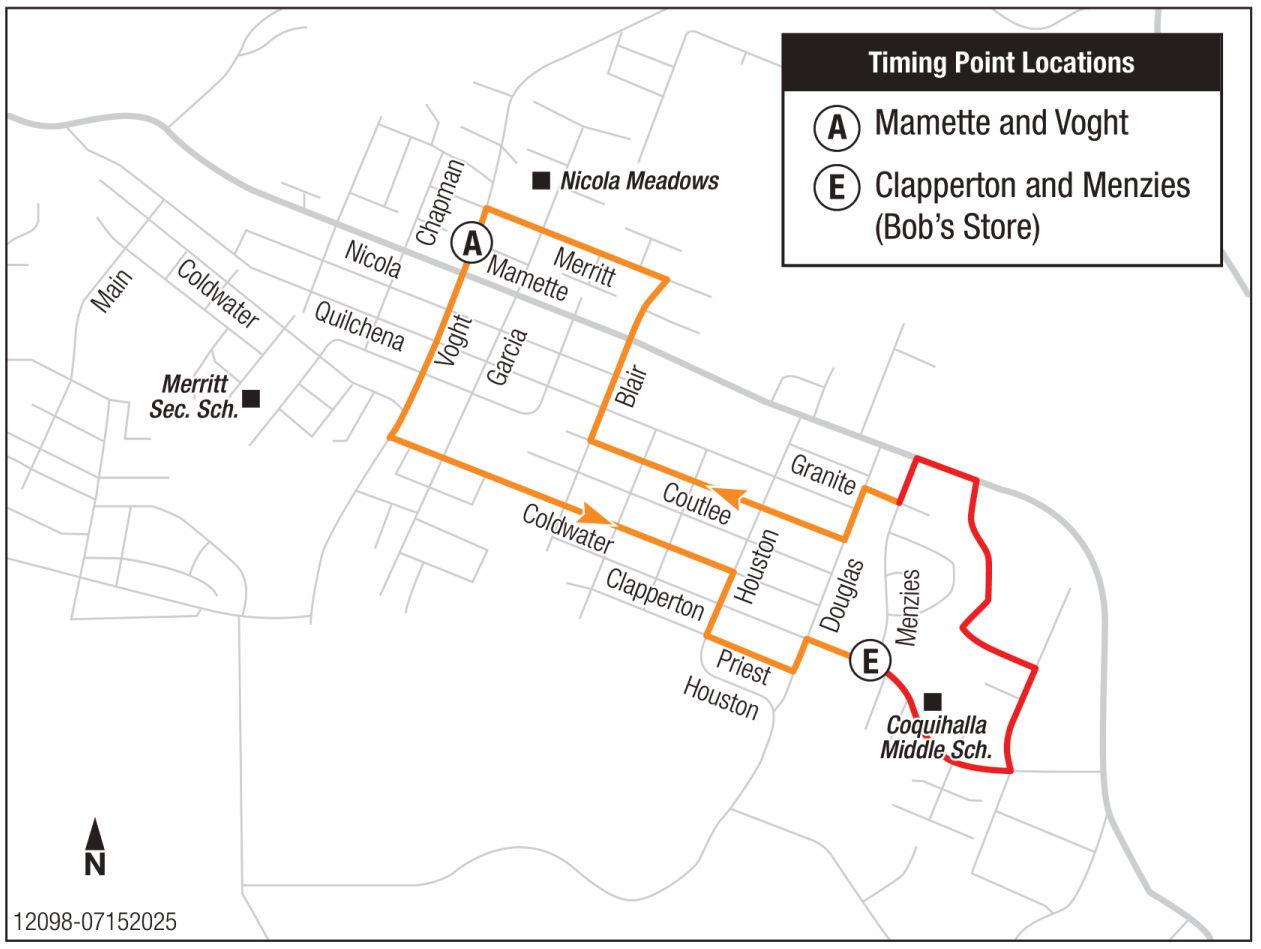
Resources: Assuming 14 round-trips Monday to Saturday and 10 round-trips Sunday, this service would cost approximately 550 annual service hours and no additional buses.

550

Annual service hours

0

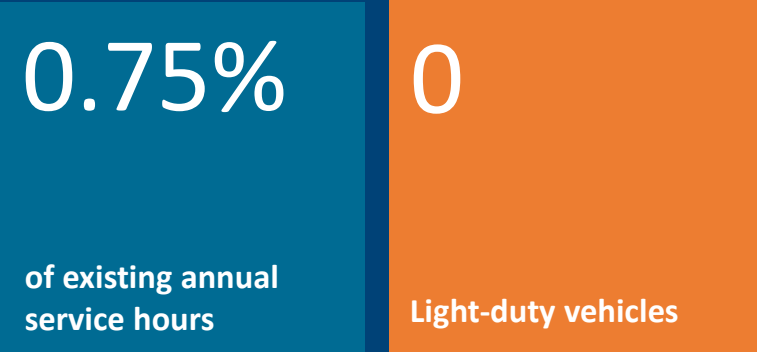
Light-duty vehicles



Existing route 3 in orange, expansion option in red. Prior to implementation, resources and route safety must be reassessed from a scheduling and operations perspective.

15 Other Service Priorities

Priority	Description
System Maintenance	<p>Industry best practice recommends that service hours be increased by a certain amount, depending on the system’s on-time performance (how reliably the bus aligns with the schedule) and passenger comfort (how crowded the bus is).</p> <p>Since Merritt is meeting its target on-time performance and passenger comfort guidelines, the recommended annual investment is 0.75% of the current service.</p>



16 Other Service Considerations

Consideration

Description

Recognizing that ridership is typically lower on weekends and holidays, consider reallocating 300 annual service hours for statutory holidays to days with higher demand.

Currently, Merritt Transit provides regular service every holiday except Christmas. Typically, systems of this size offer less, if any, service on holidays. Public engagement for this Plan found the public is equally supportive of reallocating these service hours as they are of maintaining service on statutory holidays.

Interconnected roadways, pedestrian pathways, and sidewalks designed to enhance mobility and accessibility.

Urban development patterns featuring interconnected roadways, pathways, and sidewalks foster the adoption of more active, accessible, and sustainable transportation modes. They also foster more opportunities for transit services.

Antko 21 service up to seven days a week in the AM and PM.

Engagement activities and discussions with Cooks Ferry Band revealed demand for transit expansion serving the Antko 21 community. Further exploration is necessary prior to implementation.



17 Infrastructure Priorities

Priority	Description
Invest in Bus Stop Infrastructure	<p>Improve bus stop accessibility and safety, and provide additional amenities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek investment in bus stop shelters through the BC Shelter program.• Seek investment through Merritt capital planning.• Minor Betterments funding is available to support local governments with costs.• Seek new bus stop amenities such as bus stop sign replacements as needed, garbage bins, and benches through local government funding.• New bus stops can be requested by filling out requests at www.bctransit.com/merritt/contact/



18 Your Future Network

Infrastructure

These infrastructure priorities will help to shape Merritt Transit over the next five years providing improved transit infrastructure for customer convenience and safety.

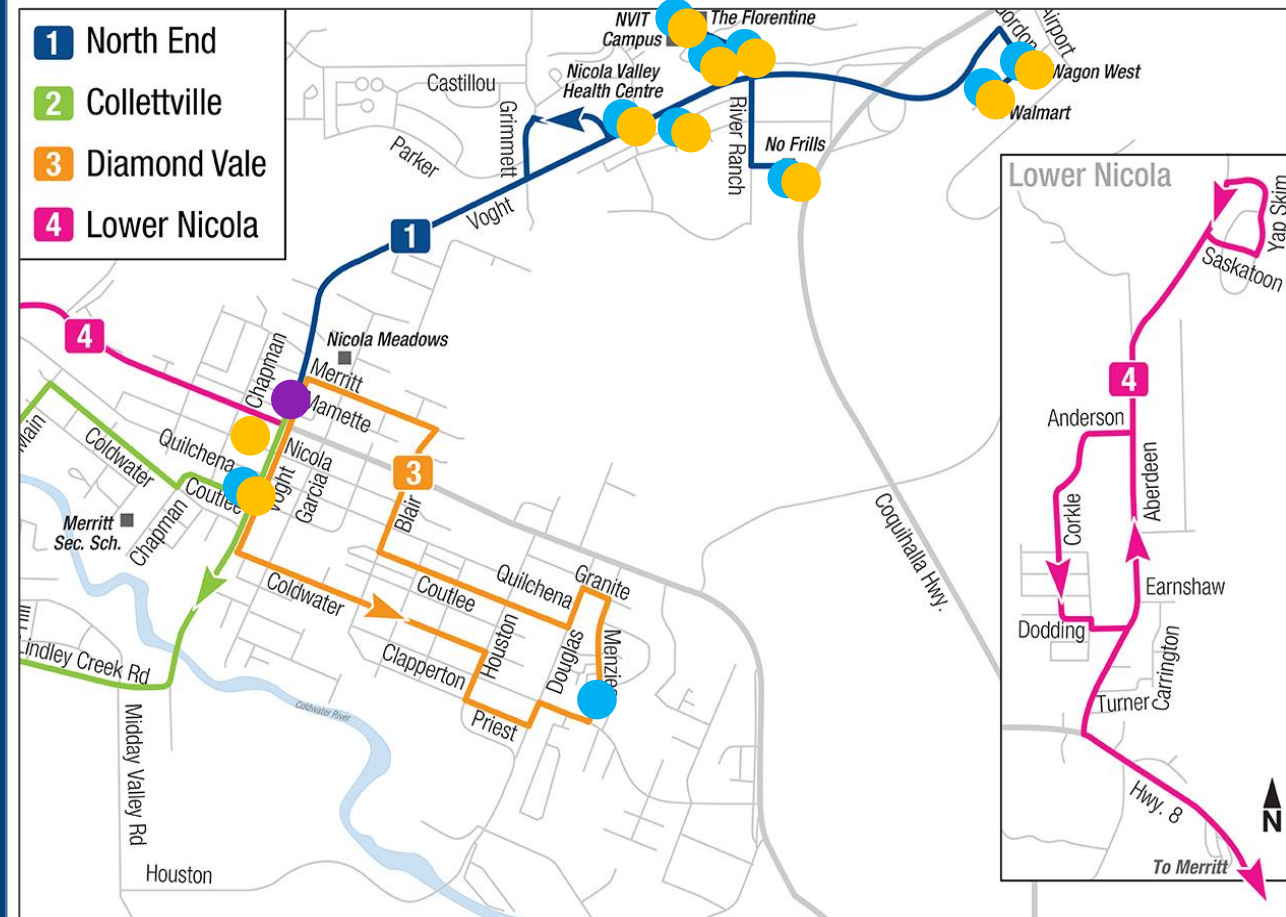
Downtown Bus Exchange – The downtown exchange consists of stop IDs 155034 Voght St NS Mamette Ave Northbound (NB), and 155001 Voght St NS Nicola Ave Southbound (SB). Stop 155034 has the most stop activity while stop 155001 has the fourth-most stop activity. Both are equipped with a shelter and bench.

Top 10 most active bus stops, other than the Downtown Exchange:

- 155044 Mall Access at Crawford NB
- 155043 River Ranch Rd at Extra Foods EB
- 155012 Menzies St at Clapperton NB
- 155041 Belshaw at Grandview Hts SB
- 155042 Belshaw St at Frontage Rd SB
- 155040 Belshaw St at De Wolf Way NB
- 155039 Voght St at 3561 Blk Eastbound (EB)
- 155084 Voght at Walters Westbound (WB)
- 155002 Voght St at Coutlee Ave SB
- 155045 Greyhound Terminal Access at Crawford SB

Top 10 key bus stop locations that would benefit from improvements, other than the Downtown Exchange

- 155044 Mall Access FS Crawford (NB)
- 155043 River Ranch Rd at Extra Foods (EB)
- 155041 Belshaw FS Grandview Hts (SB)
- 155042 Belshaw St NS Frontage Rd (SB)
- 155040 Belshaw St NS De Wolf Way (NB)
- 155039 Voght St at 3561 Blk (EB)
- 155084 Walters Voght at Walters Westbound (WB)
- 155002 Voght St NS Coutlee Ave (SB)
- 155045 Greyhound Terminal Access AT Crawford (SB)
- 155075 Nicola Ave at Chapman St EB



19 Moving Forward

Monitoring and Implementation

Performance of the transit system is monitored on an annual basis, which is typical for transit systems of this size. Performance may be monitored more closely after a significant service change to evaluate the change.

Service improvements will be integrated into the Three-Year Transit Improvement Process (TIP), which is updated on an annual basis. Infrastructure improvements will be incorporated into BC Transit's Capital Plan. Prior to implementation of service changes, BC Transit planning staff will work with Merritt staff to ensure service improvements appropriately reflect local needs. Additional targeted engagement may be conducted.



20 Investment Strategy

Funding the Plan

To achieve the goals of this plan capital and operating investments in the transit system will be required over the next five years and beyond. Annual operating costs are based on service hours that are projected to increase by up to 3,925 hours.

The plan also calls for capital investments that include:

- Up to an additional four buses added to the transit fleet
- Improvements to customer amenities at transit stops

Given the level of transit investment anticipated over the coming decades, BC Transit and its funding partners will need to evaluate stable and predictable funding sources beyond the existing mechanisms.



Thank you,

The development of this Transit Future Service Plan provides the planning overview for the development of the Merritt transit system.

This plan was made possible by participation from provincial and local governments, key stakeholders and the public. BC Transit would like to thank staff from:

- City of Merritt
- Nicola Valley Transportation Society
- Cook's Ferry Band
- Conayt Friendship Society
- Thompson-Nicola Regional District Merritt Library
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

